



Office of The Attorney General
State of Connecticut

**TESTIMONY OF
ATTORNEY GENERAL RICHARD BLUMENTHAL
BEFORE THE GOVERNMENT ADMINISTRATION AND ELECTIONS COMMITTEE
FEBRUARY 18, 2009**

I appreciate the opportunity to support Senate Bill 913, An Act Concerning United States Senate Vacancies.

This legislation provides a direct election by the voters to fill a vacancy in the office of United States Senator. The election would take place within 160 days of the vacancy or at the next regular state or municipal election if such election is not less than 63 days nor more than 125 days from the date of the vacancy.

Direct election to fill United States senator vacancies is long overdue. Currently, the Governor singularly decides who will fill the vacancy rather than the will of the people of our state. Direct elections are used in Connecticut to fill vacancies of state representatives, state senators and United States Congressmen. Gubernatorial appointment for a United States Senate vacancy is anachronistic and undemocratic. It should be abolished.

Looking at the recent experience in other states, gubernatorial appointments have spurred serious federal investigations and political controversies. Such experience has demeaned the office and degraded the democratic process. Direct election provides people a voice while alleviating a political and legal contention.

I urge the committee to also consider a similar process for filling vacancies of state constitutional officers. Currently, the legislature fills vacancies in the offices of Secretary of the State, Comptroller and Treasurer. The Governor fills vacancies in the office of the Attorney General. The people should have a similar voice in filling vacancies in these offices as they currently have in selecting the constitutional officer in a general election.

I urge the committee's favorable consideration of Senate Bill 913 with an amendment extending direct elections to vacancies of the constitutional officers.